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ABSTRACT

A comparative study of early school leaving in India, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States found that in spite of huge cultural and economic differences between these countries, there were common underlying causes of the school dropout problem. Economic need, sociocultural divisions, curricula that were unrelated to future work and life, norm-referenced systems of education, and ineffective schools created student disaffection that resulted in out-of-school youth in all four countries. However, several aspects of the problem provide potential opportunities for sharing ideas and solutions between the countries in this study. First, in each country, the roots of disaffection from school appeared to be embedded in poverty and students' need for economic security. Schools can foster individual empowerment by developing critical awareness and self-reliance. The second area for cross-fertilization is school community collaboration. Early identification of at-risk students is a third area. Minority populations were under-served in all four countries. Intervention requires a reversal of negative teacher perceptions of minority children and promotion of the value of education in their communities. Curriculum revision is a fourth possibility. More practical, life-related, and vocational/technical curricula with an emphasis on literacy are important. A fifth area is the cultivation of effective teaching practices such as cultural awareness, communication skills, and active teaching methods. The final area for international cooperation is in the development of teaching resources. (Contains 58 references.) (TD)

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Lost Educational Opportunity: Can the First and Third Worlds Inform Each Other and Transfer Solutions?

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in the junior secondary level, ages 12 to 14, is reported as 20% and higher in many locales (*Nigeria: National Report [N:NR]*, 1996, Tables 6 and 9, Section 6.6).

The focus of the issue of out-of-school youth shifts in more-developed countries to the secondary level. In the UK there are no dropouts in primary school and all students go on to secondary school; however, almost two-thirds of these students drop out of secondary school at age 16, when compulsory education ends. These school leavers have no diploma; some will continue in Sixth Form colleges that offer technical vocational courses. By age 17, only 15% of the age cohort remains in school (Male, 1988, pp. 1326, 1332). Others enter the job market or go on the dole. In 1992, the completion rate of those who attended secondary school was 81%. Before pupils reach age 16 British schools experience difficulties with absenteeism, disruption and truancy by students who are disaffected with education.

Dropout rates in the US vary widely according to region, community, race, ethnicity, economic status and recency of immigration. In 1985, US adults (age 16 and over) without the high school diploma numbered 41 million or nearly 25% of the adult population (Rumberger, 1990, p. 230). The 1997 event or annual dropout rate for students age 15 to 24 in grades 10 to 12 was 5% for males and 4.1% for females; by race and ethnicity the breakdown was 3.6% for whites, 5% for African-Americans and 9.55 for Hispanics (*National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]*, 1999, p. 136). The effect of recency of immigration on the percent of 16 to 24 year olds who were out of high school with no diploma is dramatic; 24% for foreign-born versus 10% for first generation youth (*NCES*, 1999, p. 138). In 1988, the national undereducation rate of 16 to 24 year olds not completing 12 years of education was 12.9%; for whites the rate was 12.5%, for African-Americans 15% and for Hispanics 35% (Waggoner, 1991, pp. 6 – 10). The rate is 33% in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York and Tennessee; it is also high in some cities like Chicago (43%) and New York (42%) and in Appalachia (38%) where poverty is concentrated (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987, p. 18). Wide variation in this rate is common in many states; in Rhode Island, for example, the state average of 17% incorporates a range of from 4 to 5% in affluent suburbs to 42% in urban centers with high levels of poverty and sizable foreign-born populations (*Information Works!!*, 2000, Indicator 8).

II. Comparative Causation

The causal factors underlying the problem of out-of-school youth are best seen as multi-dimensional. In both developed and developing nations, economic need and ineffective schools conspire to create student disaffection and withdrawal. However, huge differences also divide these two worlds. Many countries in Africa and Asia face rapid population growth with insufficient resources to maintain educational accommodation. On the other hand, most parts of Europe and North America have stable or declining population growth with relative abundance of resources. Nevertheless, educators continue to search for solutions to the problem of lost educational opportunity. The first step in this task must be a thorough understanding of local circumstances that condition wastage.

In India, poor children and rural girls are most likely to be out of school. Caste and gender bias are still active factors in limiting educational opportunity. Considerable poverty has the effect of compelling child labor in lieu of schooling; the need to work results in many pupils leaving school between age 9 and 14. This was shown convincingly in a 1994 study in which 68% of boys and 56% of girls cited financial need as their reason for dropping out (*PEI*, 1997, p. 75). Other traditions such as child marriage and conservative beliefs about gender roles work against the education of young girls. Many parents, being poor and illiterate, have difficulty understanding the value of education.

Aspects of India's educational system contribute to the production of under-enrollment and dropping out. Schools in many areas exist mainly for the middle and upper classes; as such, they contribute to social inequality and mass illiteracy. In poor rural districts, many schools are overcrowded, ill-equipped, and in bad repair; teachers may be poorly trained or often absent and attendance rules are inconsistently enforced. Irrelevant or boring curriculum and textbooks written without reference to the learner's level add to the problem. Language accommodation is another factor limiting access to education for some speakers of India's 845 dialects and tongues. Observers report that cultural conflicts

between tribal socialization patterns and the school's emphasis on harsh discipline with rigid activity times is another deterrent to school attendance by minorities.

In Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, traditional culture and economic dislocation have contributed to undereducation and wastage. Gender inequality and the transient lifestyle of nomadic minorities limit access to education for some groups. In some parts of the North, for example, parents have resisted education for girls because of the perception that it conflicts with traditional roles. Since 1970, the nation's economy has deteriorated; the decline of investment and economic growth has constricted expansion of the modern sector. Fewer jobs are being created for school graduates; this situation tends to undermine the rationale for formal education and creates alienation. Moreover, in traditional economic enclaves, children continue to be a vital source of labor as well as being the social security for older family members (Bray, 1981, p. 107).

The role and function of Nigerian schools is another factor contributing to wastage. The rural-urban disparity in educational provision creates inequality of opportunity; this is magnified by regional and minority inequalities. In some cases the distance from rural villages to the primary school discourages regular attendance. Language diversity, as in India, is even more significant; Nigeria, with over 300 languages, cannot provide mother tongue instruction to all its children. However, the popular image of the purpose of education is another challenge to the delivery of socially functional education. Most Nigerians regard formal education as the path away from manual work, village life and traditional culture. However, the instability of modern sector job creation has meant that many graduates lack relevant job skills and are unemployed (McQueen, 1979, pp. 87-88). This situation creates disillusionment with schooling. Consequently, primary school enrollment in many African countries has not kept pace with the growth of school age population. There is a need to reconceptualize the role and purpose of education in this rapidly changing society.

In the United Kingdom, as with India and Nigeria, the causes for maladjustment to education are both environmental and school-based. Literature cites deprivation in the home, parental indifference, low self-concepts, peer pressure, social isolation, poverty, health problems and general conditions of lower socioeconomic status as factors contributing to school failure and withdrawal. Many school leavers are pulled away from education by financial need and the search for employment.

Most recent research has examined how schools deepen the negative experience of the marginal student. For many of these students, education involves failure, humiliation, underachievement and absence of rewards for positive outcomes. Frequently, they encounter low teacher expectations that provide no incentive or motivation to succeed. School policies that label or track slow learners may only increase their sense of inferiority; the curriculum may also be unrelated to their needs and capacities. Another factor that can deepen the isolation of these students is the failure of schools to develop linkages that involve parents in their children's education. Racism and bullying are other problems that interfere with equal educational opportunity (Reid, 1986, pp.1-11).

The extraordinary social diversity of the United States adds to the complex of environmental and personal conditions associated with at-risk children. These include poverty, recent immigration, economic need to earn cash, early marriage, child-bearing out of wedlock, racial and ethnic minority status, limited English proficiency, low self-esteem, parents with little or no education, lack of occupational goals, homelessness, negative peer pressure, involvement with gangs and violent subcultures, drug abuse, parents who are migrant workers, and poor personal social adjustment as reflected in aggressive behavior and impulsivity and/or withdrawal.

U.S. schools have also been implicated in the syndrome of conditions that leads students to drop out of school. First and foremost is the prevailing practice of norm-referenced testing and measurement that produces failure by grading pupils on a curve. Dividing students into ability groups is another discriminatory practice that can increase the alienation of lower-ability students. The undifferentiated, lock-step curriculum has been identified as a cause for student boredom and disinterest; teacher inexperience and indifference may prevent effective attention to the special learning needs of at-risk children. In many school systems there are no programs to identify children with emotional problems or special needs or, in the case of truancy, to return them to school and begin remedial work. Inflexible schedules and large-group instruction are other conditions that interfere with the individual, one-on-one

Lost Educational Opportunity: Can the First and Third Worlds Inform Each Other and Transfer Solutions?

I. Introduction

Young people who are out of school are an ongoing concern for nations that strive for universal education, literacy and modernization. In some cases, children may never enroll, while in others they drop out at some stage of schooling. The causes can be as diverse as each student's circumstances; some common factors are lack of schools, uncaring or absent teachers, irrelevant curricula, child labor, unsupportive parents or personal alienation. National planners regard lost education as wastage and calculate its cost in terms of low earning power, reduced tax revenues, unemployment, increased welfare costs and absence of skilled labor for economic growth. For each individual, the decision to withdraw from school has its own existential meaning. The idea that there is a time for every purpose has significance when schools fail to respond to developmental needs of persons or communities. In this case, students and educators are right to look for alternatives.

The context for the out-of-school youth issue today is framed by the 1990 Jomtien initiative of "Education for All." However, it is noteworthy that the growing concern with wastage reflects the transition to a more complex economy with fewer opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. In this setting, people without credentials and skills become unemployable; they may also incur added social costs by resorting to drugs, crime, insurrection or terrorism. The abundance of less-skilled jobs in earlier industrial economies provided a safety valve for absorbing dropouts. Consequently, in 1900 there was far less concern with dropouts because it was evident that they could be employed rapidly in the economy. Today, this is no longer the case. On the one hand, industrial societies have become much more highly specialized and demand mostly skilled workers; on the other, developing countries often have too few modern sector jobs to employ more than a fraction of school leavers. This undermines the appeal of schooling and increases the motivation to drop out.

Research on the phenomenon of dropping out of school has gone through several permutations in the focus of interpretation. These transitions constitute a sequence of paradigm shifts. The evolution of thought reflects emerging efforts to focus on school-based remedies for this problem. In the 1950s and 1960s, most studies viewed dropping out as a result of child-centered traits, i.e. the individual's pathology; later, in the 1970s, research focused on dysfunction in the family and/or community environment as a negative influence and source of trouble. These perspectives presented only a partial view of the truth. By blaming the victim, they were not instructive for school reform. However, this view began to change in the late 1970s and 1980s with many studies that identified how the school itself was a critical factor in conditioning student alienation and withdrawal. This was an important breakthrough with the potential to foster school-based initiatives for dropout prevention. Another strand of research, from educational anthropology, has studied dropping out as a strategy with cultural validity and/or positive logical meaning centered in the world of the student. Today, increasingly, there is a trend toward seeing the act of dropping out from multi-causal and multi-dimensional perspectives, including the uniqueness of each student's circumstances.

This paper presents a comparative study of the underlying causes of early school leaving and development of programs for dropouts in India, Nigeria, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the United States (U.S.). After analysis of the similarities and differences in causation and program design, possibilities for sharing remedial and preventive approaches will be examined.

Statistics shed some light on quantitative dimensions of the dropout problem. In India, 1993 data found dropout rates for all India were 35% for males and 39% for females; wide regional variations exist in the general dropout rate that range from 0% in Kerala to 64% in Bihar (*Primary Education in India [PEI]*, 1997, pp. 24-27). Nonetheless, India has made impressive progress since 1975 when the rates were 63% for males and 66% for females. However, the rural situation is still acute today; only 35% of children enrolled in grade 1 are still in school by grade 8.

In Nigeria, 16% of the primary school age population are not enrolled in any school. The dropout rate for primary school declined from 43% for males and 41% for females in 1986 to 23% and 28% respectively in 1994. The primary school dropout rate increases in the upper primary level where children are typically in the 9 to 11 age range. Secondary level data is poor, however, average attrition

intervention needed for at-risk children. School size is another variable; smaller schools have more success in encouraging student participation in activities and parent involvement.

In each of the four countries, in spite of very great differences in culture and economic development, students who are out of school are victims of similar structural conditions. Socio-cultural divisions and economic inequalities are powerful factors influencing access to education and future opportunity in life. Education has the capacity to change these conditions for better or worse. Unfortunately, the evidence is strong in each country that schools do indeed contribute to worsening the vulnerability and failure of at-risk children. Recognition of this reality may become the key to transformation; educators in each country have committed time and resources to finding ways to improve retention and make school a more positive experience for all children.

III. Preventive and Remedial Programs

A long tradition of reform thought in Indian education has focused on ways to eliminate mass illiteracy and make schools more relevant for a traditional society with widespread poverty. Gandhi thought that education should lead to socially-useful and productive work suited to the needs of the locality of the school. In the 1960s a new plan proposed to restructure education to reach many more underserved children. Basic education was invested with work-experience that emphasized science and technology. Neighborhood schools tried to reduce inequality by being open to all children. Multiple age entry points replaced the single point entry at age 6. Special part-time classes for dropouts age 11 to 14 were added to try to achieve more functional literacy. A scheme of further voluntary part-time education was envisioned for lower primary school leavers whose need to work precluded more full-time attendance. The curriculum was to fit the aptitudes and needs of learners. Day care centers adjacent to schools were planned to increase educational access for young girls with child care responsibilities (Naik, 1976, p. 89). Other reforms included dual shift schools to enable children to work a half day without missing school, and special schools for scheduled castes and tribal minorities (Chaube, 1965, p. 85).

The persistence of wastage in India has prompted thought and action focusing on six areas of concern: promotion of education, barrier elimination, school reorganization, curriculum change, teacher performance and facility improvement. Promotional efforts have included: community awareness campaigns about the economic value of educating women; programs to educate parents in supporting school attendance, homework and reading; and involvement of parents in PTAs. Removing obstacles has meant dealing with fears, competing needs and incompatible school organization. For example, safety concerns led to a provision of escorts to girls going to school and separate toilets for girls. In some areas, parents' dependence on child labor was offset by compensation bonding their children to school. Other incentive programs assist the poor with vouchers, free textbooks, uniforms, transportation and midday meals. Non-formal education centers have provided curriculum, class times and part-time study options that fit the needs of working children who cannot attend regular schools.

School reorganization in India is mainly focused on flexible schedules that enable non-formal education to fit into the economic cycles of rural and urban working people. In addition, these initiatives are trying to improve teacher supervision, enforcement of attendance laws and the quality of instruction. A more controversial proposal advocates automatic promotion policies to reduce crowding and grade repetition.

Indian curriculum revision is based on finding what is relevant and the local community. This may require blending traditional coursework with crafts, life skills and vocational experience. Language accommodation and cultural sensitivity are other areas for curricular improvement. Problem and activity-based instruction that engages learners and promotes participation are also helpful in increasing student retention.

Teacher performance is a critical factor in reversing wastage. Some classroom accommodations include active teaching methods, use of testing and feedback, close monitoring of student work, review of past lessons, assigning homework, motivation of student participation and small group learning. One pilot project operating in six states is "Joyful Learning," that promotes active learning through science festivals and village fairs for children (*PEI*, 1997, pp. 149-151). Many teachers in India work in difficult conditions with little support and poor motivation; a UNICEF project for teacher empowerment aims to

boost teachers' self-esteem, morale and professional development as a means to achieve gains in pupil enrollment and attendance.

Unfortunately, population growth in India continues to outstrip the capacity of resources. An average rural teacher-pupil ratio of 1:50, along with the realities of teacher absenteeism and shortages, prevent any meaningful individual attention and thus contribute directly to the high dropout rate in the lower primary grades. The hiring of more teachers is essential; and more women teachers are needed to encourage girls' education. Inservice education has been initiated at local training centers to introduce teachers to new methods, improve their knowledge base and develop skills needed for working in the informal setting. Teacher education needs to emphasize cultural and gender sensitivity training, as well as language proficiency for those working with tribal minorities. Recruiting local teachers and resource persons is another effective means of integrating education with local culture.

Improvement and expansion of school facilities are still needed even though great progress has been made. For example, India now has 1 school within 1 kilometer of 95% of the population and 1 school for 80% of villages; however, 700,000 more classrooms are needed to gain a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40. "Operation Blackboard" eliminated many single-teacher schools that, as recently as 1987, comprised 30% of all schools in India (*PEI*, 1997, pp. 67-79). Another gain from this project was the provision of packaged teaching materials for every school. Textbook availability is essential for boosting student achievement. Attention to readability of texts, regular revisions of materials and provision of school libraries can also bring gains in achievement and retention.

Another key to reducing wastage is more effective local governance of education. A three-tier system of local control was restored in the 1960s; it divides responsibilities among district, block and village agencies. Powers include hiring and removal of teachers, school funding, and supervision. Curriculum in India is the responsibility of state education ministries.

Nigerian efforts to extend education to out-of-school youth are based on a commitment to the Jomtien Declaration. Programs for achieving this goal have been developed through a Basic Education Plan that was reaffirmed in 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance. The long-term goal is 9 years of universal education for every child. Two out of five immediate goals relate to the wastage problem; one provision calls for reduction of dropouts from the formal school system by improving relevance, quality and efficiency of education. In primary education, the target is to boost completion rates from 58% to 75% and reduce the gender gap from 17.3% to 5% by providing better access to school for girls (*N:NR*, 1996, p. 10). Another goal is to use informal education to bring basic literacy and skill development to dropouts and all other out-of-school children and adolescents.

The Nigerian government recognized a need to increase the responsibility of communities in the planning, management and monitoring of primary education. The Community Education Program was started in 1996 to develop education in under-served communities of nomadic people, migrant fishermen and others living in remote regions. One major goal of this initiative is promotion of access to quality education for girls and illiterate women. Functional illiteracy, a condition affecting 60% of women and 38% of men, was addressed by a mass literacy campaign beginning in 1991; by 1995 this non-formal effort had enrolled 700,000 students, trained 15,500 instructors and 1500 supervisors (*N:NR*, 1996, pp. 23-24). The community role in reform is addressed by the Catchment Area Planning, Management and Monitoring Project, a UNICEF-sponsored program to boost retention of students in schools. Concern for the relevance of education for life at the junior secondary level has led to efforts to balance academic curricula with pre-vocational courses that teach technical skills, crafts, home economics and business subjects.

Nigeria is making some major efforts to improve educational opportunities for women. The country's extreme cultural diversity causes considerable variation in popular support for gender equity. One strategy involves mobilizing community support in promoting the value of education for girls. The Early Child Care Project, a UNICEF program, has placed day care centers adjacent to nursery and primary schools to improve retention of young girls with child care responsibilities. These centers utilize non-formal methods and play to promote early learning and child development. Women's Education Centers were created in some states as advocacy units for the education of girls and women. In 1995, Functional Literacy Centers for Women numbered 720 and served 160,000 pupils with courses for basic literacy and

enhancement of income-generating skills (*N:NR*, 1996, p. 24). Some special schools have been created to increase educational opportunities for adolescent girls through informal programs in basic education.

Street children, who are homeless, out of school, and without guardians are a growing population in many African cities. A recent survey estimated they may number 10,000 in Lagos. Some educational provisions for this group include non-formal vocational drop-in centers that teach basic literacy and job skills. Social welfare workers are also being trained in ways to help these children.

More than 2 million children attend Koranic Schools in Nigeria. Hitherto, these institutions provided only religious instruction and Arabic literacy; today the curriculum of these schools has been augmented with basic education courses so that these children can cross the bridge into advanced secular education if they so choose.

The United Kingdom has been slow to develop any coherent educational policies to deal with the emerging multi-racial society resulting from new immigration. The James Committee in 1971 was the first to recommend that teachers should receive special preparation for working with racially and linguistically diverse populations (Little, 1981, pp. 61-62). Special language centers were established for immigrants. School adjustments were left to the discretion of Local Education Authorities (LEA); in reality, very little was done. However, the need for school reform was recognized; the Rampton Report (1981) concluded that the academic underachievement of recent immigrants was caused by racist attitudes, textbook bias, inadequate language instruction and ineffective teacher education (Watson, 1985, p. 81). Some corrective proposals included language programs for parents, textbook revisions, elimination of bias or prejudice in curriculum, bilingual education and the addition of ESL and cultural studies in teacher education.

Disruptive students are another problem in English secondary schools. Beginning in 1974, many LEAs established special referral units for disruptive students off-site as well as on school campuses. This program has been widely expanded because of its success in behavior modification and return of pupils to regular educational settings. Ling (1985) studied two of these centers in contrast to the regular school environment and identified several traits that seem to account for their success with these pupils; these included a favorable teacher-pupil ratio (1:8), relaxation of some behavioral rules and curricular demands, the high capability and charisma of the teaching staff, positive teacher-pupil relations, cooperative activities, pupil acceptance of attendance and freedom to experiment. In addition, Ling noted a number of teaching strategies that were effective, including: thorough organization of activities; unit contracts as a basis for teacher-pupil relations; clarification of meaning in any ambiguous actions; careful selection of physical and verbal means of interaction; a child-centered approach; outcome-based instruction with the goal being return to school; formal rules; "points" system for behavior modification; group decision-making; open and accessible staff; and a structure of control periods, i.e. reading, study, lunch, recreation, etc.

The transition of post-16 secondary school leavers into further education in the United Kingdom is another major concern. Recent studies in the mid-1990s reported high dropout rates of 20 to 50% at this stage among minorities, particularly West Indian students and inner-city youth (Ward, 1996, p. 26). Because school leavers at age 16 have no qualifications or skills, dropping out is seen as a road to unemployment, crime, homelessness and dependency (Nash, 1996, p. 25). Several innovative programs pioneered by Further Education Colleges (FEC) have tried to remedy this fallout. One college collaborated with its feeder schools to run part-time "taster" courses on campus to introduce pre-16 students to the FEC programs and encourage post-16 enrollment. Another college enrolled 200 pre-16 pupils on release time from local schools; 1 in 5 at-risk students were selected for referral into the program (Ward, 1995, p. 21). A collaboration between FEC's, Training and Enterprise Councils (TEC) and LEAs used government grants to establish a negotiated contract with truants who agree to attend school in exchange for weekly release to an FEC or work experience program. Other schemes have involved joint ventures with voluntary agencies that run community service programs. Another solution favored by TECs is the modern apprenticeship model that combines high-quality education with on-the-job training linked to a real future job.

The U.S. is a large and diverse society with a decentralized system of education and considerable freedom for experimentation. Consequently, programs for dropouts and out-of-school youth are varied

and responsive to social change. Some common elements in many programs are accommodation, prevention, remediation and redirection.

Preschool and kindergarten programs focus on the critical variable of literacy because reading below level is one of the strongest predictors for students dropping out in future. One current program, "Even Start," works with preschool children and parents from impoverished backgrounds to build early foundations for literacy and teach parents how to help children with reading at home. Other early interventions include Head Start, that enrich the early development of children in poor districts so that they would not begin school already behind peers from more affluent homes. Compensatory education to improve math and reading skills of economically-disadvantaged youth began with Title I in 1970; funds have reached 90% of schools, however, only 50% of eligible children are being served (Orr, 1987, pp. 13-25).

In upper elementary grades, case management programs for high-risk pre-adolescents involve collaboration between the school and social agencies in the community. Tutorial programs have been established for underachievers; counseling programs usually focus on helping children overcome low self-esteem that affects their scholastic performance.

Federal assistance to schools for dropout prevention efforts was provided by Title VIII beginning in 1968. These programs vary widely. Some of the most common approaches include early identification of potential dropouts, support programs utilizing peer counselors and tutors, participation in extracurricular activities, work-study programs focused on job readiness, and systems to monitor student attendance and progress.

In the early 1970s, career academies began to be established within high schools; these programs offer high level teacher support, a smaller school environment, mentoring opportunities, and experience in the business world. Today these academies are found in over 1500 high schools (Gehring, 2000, p. 61).

In the 1990s alternative education programs were first developed in Texas and have since spread to 65% of U.S. school districts (De La Rosa, 1998, pp. 268-272). This program is similar in some respects to the referral centers in U.K. Emphasis is given to developing basic skills, self-esteem, future career orientation and work-study experience. Most centers are small in size and located in the community apart from the school. The program is voluntary with open exit/entry and flexible attendance. Teachers are accessible; instruction may be individual or small group. The teacher-pupil ratio is about 1:15 in most cases. The atmosphere is informal and caring, with students being treated like adults; as such they are expected to take responsibility for their own education (Dugger and Dugger, 1998, pp. 218-228).

Other efforts to prevent dropouts have involved interventions such as community involvement, improved counseling, parent participation and teacher development. Reconstruction of classroom environments has encompassed teaching that empowers students to learn how to learn with content, reasoning and communication skills. Curriculum is focused on clear objectives, sequencing and evaluation. Varied patterns of grouping are used in instruction. Teacher expectations are generally high for all learners. Programs are integrated with non-school settings.

Community interface is found in employment, training and service programs. The Job Training Partnership Act (1981) provides job training and placement for dropouts as a condition for their return to high school until they graduate; however, success has been marginal. Some service programs involve student peers and adult leaders helping at-risk students, mentors from the business world adopting students and summer youth employment schemes.

Pregnant teenagers who miss school are placed at an even greater disadvantage. High schools have established day care centers so that these young women can attend school with provision for child care. Other programs have stressed employment training and basic education for teenage mothers including courses in child care, parenting and family life (Zellman and Feifer, 1992, pp. 1391-1395).

Migrant farm workers in the U.S. are one of the most vulnerable groups for lost educational opportunity. Beginning in 1966, an array of different educational programs have been developed for these children, however, continuity is a persistent problem. Provisions are also varied and inconsistent. Consequently, migrants may be placed in special education, or with the disadvantaged, or in regular classrooms, depending on LEA policy. The Migrant Dropout Youth Program focuses on counseling,

vocational education and GED; schools collaborate with social service agencies to maintain migrant school attendance. Portable learning packets that facilitate sequential learning have been given to students who are moving on as their families follow work opportunities. Washington state, the northern terminus of the western harvest trail that begins in Texas, created the Secondary Credit Exchange Program that allows students to use graduation credits earned in other states and enables migrant youth over age 14 to finish high school by attending evening classes (Ianni and Reuss-Ianni, 1992, pp. 852-856).

IV. Prospects for Shared Solutions

A comparative analysis of the causes of the out-of-school youth problem and of remedial programs provides a foundation for evaluating the prospects for shared solutions. Several similarities in causation are noteworthy. In all four countries, economic needs are compelling a minority of students to not enroll or to drop out of school; moreover, education is devalued because of the perception that school is unrelated to future work and life. Norm-referenced systems of formal education in each country encourage student withdrawal by treating some students as failures. Schools in each country contribute in similar ways to this problem: teachers tend to neglect or reject students with learning difficulty; curriculum is not differentiated to enable successful education of all children; and school policies and rules are rigid and often fail to accommodate students with circumstantial constraints. There are also examples in each country of alternate school choices that reflect cultural conflict between ethnic and religious groups and the program of state-sponsored secular education.

Significant differences are evident in the climate of causation. Economic need in developing countries like India and Nigeria is based on the role of child labor in agricultural, village and traditional economies; this conflicts with primary education. In the U.S. and U.K., however, such need usually arises among secondary students who begin families or are recent immigrants. Another difference that affects social attitudes toward the utility of education is government provision for social security in the U.S. and U.K.; most people in India and Nigeria, by contrast, have no comprehensive system of welfare, disability or old age insurance. They are dependent on the traditional social order for such needs. Consequently, the expectation that education should 'pay off' may be heightened by the absence of this safety net. However, as evidence mounts that schooling does not necessarily lead to employment, dropping out may reflect a recognition that traditional society offers more security.

Several cultural variables in the four countries create different conditions that influence the causes of wastage. India and Nigeria are new nations with school systems that are neither compulsory nor universal; the U.K. and U.S., on the other hand, are older countries with over a century of experience with general mass education. Resources and facilities in India and Nigeria are still unable to provide a school place for every child; in the U.K. and U.S., by contrast, the comprehensive systems are in place and more resources are available to fund programs that address problems and special needs. Moreover, longer social experience with general education in these countries makes for a lower level of resistance to schooling.

The status of minority children in schools is affected by the character of diversity in national culture. In India, U.K. and the U.S. we see a fairly hegemonic majority culture, with a variety of peripheral minority groups who struggle to achieve equal access to and quality of education. Nigeria, on the other hand, has been destabilized since independence by hegemonic conflicts among several majority groups and by the challenge of providing equal educational opportunity to more than 250 different ethnic cultures. Alienation and wastage among underserved minorities and some recent immigrants are common problems in all countries, however, these are magnified in some traditional pluralistic societies when assimilation is not favored. For example, some groups might decide that the secular education system constitutes a threat to their religious values and remove their children from state schools. On the other hand, voluntary immigration in countries like the U.K. and U.S. may dispose some immigrants to assimilate the majority culture through education as a means to achieving economic goals.

In all four countries, similarities are evident in the approaches taken by remedial programs that target the dropout problem. These include: the need to promote the value of education to children, community and parents; curriculum reconstruction that makes school more relevant to local life and future occupational needs; flexible programs that accommodate special needs and external time demands

on children who are at risk of withdrawal; and education of teachers to care more and raise their expectations for all children.

Significant differences in these programs reflect developmental variations in each country. In India and Nigeria, the supply of trained teachers is insufficient to staff alternative referral programs like those found in the U.K. and U.S.; hence, there is an interest in building local community responsibility and control. The focus of programs in India and Nigeria is mainly on basic education at the primary level, whereas educators in the U.K. and U.S. are more concerned with secondary dropouts.

Secondary school leavers in India and Nigeria have migrated to cities to seek modern sector jobs that are often non-existent; consequently, governments created drop-in vocational education centers in urban areas, vocationalized the secondary curriculum and encouraged students to remain at home and improve village life. By contrast, in the U.K. and U.S. students often migrate to find jobs because opportunities are widely scattered in capitalist economies. Nonetheless, the imperfect relationship between educational programs and job creation is still a problem in all four countries: in the U.K. and U.S. recessions and economic changes, like automation, can totally alter labor markets; in Nigeria, political instability and corruption have hampered economic growth; in India a limited modern sector economic dynamism is blended with a vast traditional economy characterized by poverty and subsistence.

The vast majority of student dropouts in all four countries cite economic need as the principal reason for withdrawal from education. It appears, therefore, that their expectation was that education would be a path to economic improvement. However, it seems that few students and even fewer teachers understand how the schools can equip graduates to qualify for good jobs, a life of self-reliance and realization of their potential. This is best done by teaching students how to learn, think critically, evaluate evidence, solve problems, understand relationships, and make decisions based on clear and logical reasoning. Schools cannot provide jobs; only the economy will do that. Education, nonetheless, should strengthen the mental faculties needed to survive well in any environment, whether that be a village farm, a computer assembly plant or a fishing boat.

There are several aspects of the out-of-school youth problem that provide potential opportunities for sharing of ideas and solutions between the countries in this study. First, in each country, the roots of disaffection from school appear to be embedded in the situation of poverty and students' need to discover a secure road to economic opportunity. Job creation is important, but that lies outside the province of education. However, schools can sow the seeds for change and foster individual empowerment by developing critical awareness and self-reliance. This may counteract the disempowerment resulting from dropping out.

The second potential area for cross-fertilization is school-community collaboration. The goal is to help all children to remain in school and succeed. A collateral objective is to reconstruct the bonds that integrate the whole community as an active social force. This process might be facilitated by government contracts or NGO projects that extend assistance in economic development in exchange for full participation of children in education. However, it is also important that the community decide for itself what forms of education are essential for its development.

The third possible field for cooperation is school planning for early identification of at-risk students. Studies in all four countries identified minority populations as under-served or vulnerable to early withdrawal from education. Intervention requires a reversal of traditional negative teacher perceptions of these children, promotion of the value of education in their communities, clear communication of expected outcomes and effective monitoring of individual student progress. In developing countries such identification may take the form of recruitment of non-enrolled students and promotional education of parents.

The fourth possibility for shared ideas is in curriculum revision. In each of the countries, the trend in curriculum is toward more practical, life-related and vocational-technical fields of study. Special emphasis is given to literacy as the most important skill for assuring continuation of learning. It is also common to find the course of study being related to future outcomes through individual choice of fields of study, career awareness and work-study experiences.

The fifth concern in all countries is the need to cultivate effective teaching practices. Changes in teacher education include sensitivity training, intercultural awareness and mastery of communication skills. Training in active teaching methods that engage learners, make subjects exciting to study and

promote participation have the potential to increase the attraction of school for all children. Reduction of the teacher-pupil ratio is also essential if teachers are to be able to reach out to individual students as mentors.

The final area for international cooperation is the development of teaching resources. Assistance projects that foster community self-reliance and innovation are badly needed. Good teaching materials require updating and revision; community resource persons could be trained to take this responsibility. Innovative ideas like the portable learning packets developed in the U.S. for migrant workers' children are easily transferred. In India and Nigeria, more resources are needed to supply all students with basic texts. Locally-based cost-efficient print shops could produce the necessary books from templates. Many schools also lack science equipment; however, most of the basic supplies needed to teach science can be found locally and assembled into kits from indigenous materials. Community organization could provide many of these needs through cooperatives, with credits from the government.

V. Conclusion

The continued existence of non-enrollment and wastage in education represents a lost opportunity for countries and individuals. The wide diversity of circumstances affecting children favors flexible choices and varied types of school settings that range from formal and informal to traditional. All of these arrangements could be enhanced by integration with community development projects. Outside assistance should focus on facilitating local organization and building the capacity to identify needs, initiate changes and monitor results.

Wastage and non-attendance also weaken the school's role in nation-building. Mass education has been one of the principal means for teaching national values, civic culture and history. This common experience acts to balance unity with diversity; it is also the basis for civil consensus underlying the social compact. In new nations, these institutions are fragile and subject to instability. However, national survival depends on the transmission of the civic culture to each new generation and others such as migrants, immigrants and refugees. The rate of non-participation in education appears to be correlated with the degree of political instability and disorder in many countries.

The exact form and content of education derive from the political and economic systems mandated by the national constitution. Differences in the emphasis of knowledge, economic behavior and skills reflect the varied perspectives of capitalism, democracy, socialism, etc. However, all systems seem to benefit from educational policies based on full literacy, equal opportunity and the right to freely choose one's direction in life. Moreover, the need to commit more resources to eliminate educational wastage is mandated by the international human rights movement that regards education as a basic entitlement of all children. The alternative of under-education that invites negative social costs of crime, drug abuse, violent rebellion and incarceration is unthinkable.

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